

Ronda C Thorington

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RE: Department of Education's Legislative Agenda

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Ronda Thorington and I am from Manchester. I have three children (one son and two daughters) who attend the CREC Academy of International Studies (formerly Metropolitan Learning Center). I am asking you to please support an increase in the RESC state magnet grant.

My children benefit greatly through the extraordinary opportunity that they experience every day at CREC International. This diverse and engaging learning environment with an international studies theme benefits my children by broadening their cultural experience from within the four walls of a school. More importantly, my children get to experience multicultural excellence outside of their immediate and extended family. Additionally, I know that my children learn better and are more prepared for the real world as a result of working alongside other students from different backgrounds.

Each of my children are growing and blossoming in part because of the culturally rich environment in which they learn. My 17-year-old son for the first time, has been able to learn from teachers that look like him and have an expectation for him to excel. He has teachers that believe in him and his ability to succeed. This belief has contributed to the fact that now, as a senior, he has multiple college acceptances and merit scholarship awards from which to choose as he makes the transition into adulthood. My 15 year old daughter who has special needs experiences teachers that have the desire and capacity to think outside the box so that she can be a part of the same educational exposures as her peers. I can recall when she was in the 6th grade and was well enough to participate in an overnight field trip. The nursing staff and the teacher who were to be responsible for her medication during the trip took time out of their schedule to attend a meeting to discuss all of her daily medications (at the time she required 4

medications twice daily) and rescue meds if necessary, as well as the subtle signs to be aware of should she require medical intervention. They also remained in contact with me during the trip to keep me apprised of her status. Most recently, my 12-year-old daughter was identified by her writing teacher to participate in a writing competition. When school was cancelled unexpectedly the day before the piece was due this teacher called to speak with my daughter, and they worked together for over 30 minutes to do the required edits in order to submit the piece on time. The level of dedication and the manner in which multiple teachers go above and beyond what is required has been a consistent experience and one which I did not have in our local school and one for which I am beyond thankful.

Our magnet schools are at risk. Without sustainable funding, CREC which operates 16 innovative schools, will be forced to either cut programming or to increase the tuition costs they charge to local school districts. I am asking the legislature to follow through on its promise to invest in the future of all students. Magnet schools have a successful track record of providing their students a chance to thrive. Currently the Sheff Stipulated Agreement requires the expansion of schools and program, before you add any more schools, please adequately fund those that you have established and that are thriving. I urge you to continue funding the schools that are already operating and available and have demonstrated success before you consider funding new school choice options.

Sincerely,

Ronda Thorington